

us, its people. For America has been enriched beyond measure by Italian-Americans.

In this century we have been treated to supreme grace on our sporting fields by athletes from Joe Dimaggio to Joe Montana. In the fine arts we've been blessed with the exuberance of Italians in music from Toscanini to Sinatra to Jon Bon Jovi. [Laughter] We have seen the pathbreaking innovation of Frank Stella in painting, and we have seen Italian after Italian after Italian grace the silver screen, from Frank Capra to this year's best actor, Nicholas Cage.

We have, as everyone knows, benefited enormously from contributions to our public life from the legendary Fiorello LaGuardia to Senator John Pastore, Judge John Sirica, Governor Cuomo, Geraldine Ferraro, the many Italian-American mayors here tonight, the many Italian-Americans now serving in Congress, and to the Italian-Americans who serve on the court, beginning with the Supreme Court Justice, who has also joined us this evening.

Of course, there are millions more. The Italian-Americans who built our businesses and our farms, who are the backbone of our communities, they deserve so much of the credit for America's strength and greatness.

Many believe the remarkable story of Italians in America began with the immigration at the early part of this century. But in fact, the pattern was set long before that by an Italian named Henry de Tonti, born Enrico Tonti in Gaeta. A renowned soldier, sometime diplomat, fearless adventurer, Tonti was the most trusted deputy of the great French explorer La Salle. You could say he was La Salle's Leon Panetta. [Laughter]

He had an incredible string of accomplishments. He was the first European to build a ship on our Great Lakes. He and La Salle together explored the Mississippi River. He brought settlers and traders to the great State of Illinois. And historians credit him with being the true father of that State. This remarkable Italian came to my attention because in 1686 he founded a settlement about midway between Illinois and the Gulf of Mexico on the Mississippi River. The town became known as Arkansas Post, the very first settlement in my home State.

La Salle said that Tonti's energy and resolve made him, and I quote, "equal to anything." In their long and rich history, Italian-Americans have proved themselves equal to anything. And so the extraordinary friendship between the United States and Italy has also proved equal to anything.

The extraordinary friendship between the United States and Italy, rooted in our common love of liberty and democracy, our shared energy and resolve, will help us rise to the challenges of the 21st century and will ensure that we will always be the closest of allies, the best of friends.

And so ladies and gentlemen, let us raise a glass to the partnership between our nations, to the Italian-American community, to the President of Italy and his daughter. *Viva l'Italia*, and God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:37 p.m. in the East Room at the White House.

## Remarks to Commerce Department Employees on the Aircraft Tragedy in Croatia

April 3, 1996

Thank you, Dr. Good. Ladies and gentlemen, the Vice President and the First Lady and the members of the Cabinet and I wanted to come here to be with the employees of the Commerce Department at this very difficult hour. Hillary and I have just come from Ron Brown's home, visiting with Alma and Michael and their family

and friends who are there. And we wanted to come and spend a few moments with you.

As all of you know, the plane carrying Secretary Brown and his delegation, including a number of your colleagues, business leaders, and members of the United States military, went down today near Dubrovnik, Croatia. We do not know for sure what happened there. But

I wanted to come here today, as it is almost Passover for American Jews and I know a lot of you will want to be leaving soon, just to have the chance to say a few words to you.

The first thing I want to say is, before I left I asked Alma, I said, "Alma, what do you want me to say when I go to the Commerce Department?" She said, "Tell them Ron was proud of them, that he liked them, that he believed in them, and that he fought for the Commerce Department, and tell them that you're going to do that now," which I thought was an incredible thing.

I've known Ron Brown a long time. I was always amazed at the way he was continually reaching out trying to bridge the differences between people, always trying to get the best out of people, always believing that we could do more than we have done. In a way, this job was sort of ready-made for him at this moment in history, and he loved it very much.

Most of the time, Ron Brown spent using the power of the Commerce Department to find ways to give opportunity to ordinary Americans, to generate jobs for the American economy and build better futures for American citizens. But when we met earlier this week, right before he left for the Balkans, he was so excited because he thought that, along with these business leaders and the other very able people from the Commerce Department on this mission, that they would be able to use the power of the American economy to help the peace take hold in the Balkans, to help people in that troubled place have the kind of decent, honorable, and wonderfully ordinary lives that we Americans too often take for granted. And he was so excited by it. If you saw any of the clips on the television that have been showing today about his meetings yesterday, you could see that.

I just want to say on a very personal note that I hope all Americans today will be grateful for what all the people who were on that plane did, for the military personnel, for the business leaders, who didn't have to go on that mission, who did it not out of a sense of their own profit but out of a sense of what they could do to help America bring peace.

To all of the wonderful people in the Commerce Department that were on that plane, some of them very young, one of them who came to our campaign in 1992 thinking the most important thing he could do was to ride a bicycle across the country asking people to vote

for the Vice President and me, wound up a trusted employee at the Commerce Department; to all of their loved ones and their families, their friends, I want to say I am very grateful for their lives and their service.

I also want to say just one last thing about Ron Brown. He was one of the best advisers and ablest people I ever knew. And he was very, very good at everything he ever did. Whether he was the Commerce Secretary or a civil rights leader or something else, he was always out there just giving it his all. And he always believed that his mission in life was to put people's dreams within their reach if they were willing to work for it and believe in themselves.

When we were over at his home a few moments ago, Alexis Herman, who as many of you know used to work with Ron at the Democratic Committee, and they've been friends a long time, told me that his favorite Scripture verse was that wonderful verse from Isaiah:

They who wait upon the Lord shall have their strength renewed. They shall mount up with wings as eagles. They will run and not grow weary. They will walk and faint not.

Well, Ron Brown walked and ran and flew through life. And he was a magnificent life force. And those of us who loved him will always be grateful for his friendship and his warmth.

But every American should be grateful that at a very difficult moment in our Nation's history, he made this Commerce Department what it was meant to be, an instrument for realizing the potential of every American. For all of you who played a role in that, I ask for your prayers for Secretary Brown and his family, for your colleagues and their families, for the business leaders and their families, and for our beloved military officers and their families. And I ask you always, always to be fiercely proud for what you have done and very grateful for the opportunity to have done it.

I'd like to ask now that we bow for a moment of silence.

*[At this point, a moment of silence was observed.]*

Amen.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:09 p.m. at the Department of Commerce. In his remarks, he referred to Secretary Brown's widow, Alma Brown, and his son, Michael Brown. The related proclamation of April 4 is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

## Message on the Observance of Passover, 1996

*April 3, 1996*

Warm greetings to all who are celebrating Passover.

This festival chronicles God's deliverance of the Israelites from their bondage in Egypt. With faith and determination, these courageous people sought liberation from slavery and a path to freedom. Although their journey was long and fraught with peril, the children of Israel reached the Promised Land to rebuild their communities in the sweet air of freedom.

More than three millenia later, Jews across America and around the world gather during Passover to commemorate this epic journey. The holiday seder itself is rich with symbols—of the suffering endured by the Israelites in Egypt, the difficulties encountered during their exodus,

and their unquenchable hope for the future. And throughout this ritual meal, unifying and sanctifying it, prayers are recited in praise of God and in gratitude for His intervention in the struggle of the Israelites.

This year Passover has fresh meaning for us. The seder's bitter herbs and salt water remind us of our sorrow at the death of Yitzhak Rabin and the loss of so many innocents to the evil of terrorism. But as this harsh winter ends, we remember as well that God still lights our path and that, with courage and hope, the best in human nature will still prevail.

Hillary and I extend warm wishes for a memorable Passover.

BILL CLINTON

## Remarks Following a Memorial Service for Secretary of Commerce

Ronald H. Brown

*April 4, 1996*

Ladies and gentlemen, we just had a very moving memorial service not only to grieve but to celebrate the life of Secretary Brown and the other employees of the National Government, our military people, and the business leaders who were on that mission. We thanked God for their lives, we prayed for their families, and we came together in our grief and rededication. And we pointed out that it was 28 years ago on this day that Martin Luther King was killed in Memphis, working for what he believed in.

Today I spoke with the parents of one of the young women who died who worked for the Department of Commerce, who said they

had spent their careers as schoolteachers, raising their daughter to believe that she could make a difference and that she ought to try. And they were very proud that she died doing what she believed in, trying to aid the peace in Bosnia.

And so that is how we are trying to think about this very difficult thing on this beautiful spring day in Easter Week.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:15 p.m. outside St. John's Church, Lafayette Square.